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Editorial: A bottle to the sea

Writing a poem, said Osip Mandelstam in his short essay "On the interlocutor", is like tossing a bottle into the sea: one does not know who will find the bottle, nor who will read the message it contains and be intimately touched by it. Relatively speaking, there is something of this in a call for papers. Who will open the bottle? Who will feel touched? Who will reply?

We published, in the first days of March, the call for papers of the first *PuppetPlays* international conference, *Literary writing for puppets and marionettes in Western Europe (17th - 21st centuries)*, which will be held in Montpellier, from 14 to 16 October 2021.

"I wish I were a specialist", replied a colleague who is a Professor in the Practice of Dramaturgy at Yale University, "just so I could join!". We do hope that we will convince her to do so! Because the objective of a conference, in a field as little studied as that of puppetry, is precisely to widen the narrow circle of specialists. We need to reflect with those who, having opened the bottle and read the message in it, felt intimately touched. They are, quite naturally, our "interlocutors".

[Prof. Dr. Plassard]

Here the link to our Call for papers:

https://puppetplays.www.univ-montp3.fr/en/news/1st-international-conference-literary-writing-puppets-and-marionettes

Living puppets

The third online meeting on the PuppetPlays Facebook page will take place on Tuesday 23 March at 18:00. Jean Boutan will introduce us to theatre for "living puppets": thus the enigmatic title the comic playwright August von Kotzebue gave to his play *The Count of Gleichen* (1808), which opens up outlooks on a small but very original corpus of plays from the turn of the 1800s, specifically written for this innovative form of figure theatre, in which actors play like puppets. A discussion with Xavier Galmiche, professor at Sorbonne University and a noted expert on the culture of entertainment in Central Europe will follow.

On that occasion, we will have a look at some writers who used puppet theatre and living puppets in order to create



an alternative form of literature to the dominant trends of their time, and with whom posterity was quite often unfair.

The first of them had the idea of writing a play of this kind, the one-act play *Alfarazambul or The Marionettes* (1790), when he saw



a performance by a travelling theatre company including both actors and rod puppets. The anonymous author happened to be Johann Georg Jacobi, and was known for his anacreontic lyrics and light-hearted poetry, that were set to music by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert or Mendelssohn.

Siegfried August Mahlmann published a collection of puppet plays, but also tried his hand with living puppets in a play within the play *Simon Lämchen, or Hannswurst and His Family* (1803). He pitted his wits against Kotzebue himself, back then very famous for his comedies, and who will be our last example of this theatrical form that seems to anticipate the experimental creations of modern theatre.

You will know everything about living puppets on 23 March: don't miss our "rendez-vous"! (in English)

[Dr. Jean Boutan]

PuppetPlays and writing for young audiences

Among the countless puppet plays for young audiences, some truly deserve the attention of puppeteers and stage directors as well as researchers. This is the case of *Le Petit Poucet* [Little Thumb] written in 1923 by the French poet, painter, sculptor and playwright Pierre Albert-Birot (nicknamed "PAB"). Much more than a simple adaptation of Charles Perrault's tale, PAB composed a "drama for marionettes in 5 acts and 14 tableaux" of about a hundred pages, including a prologue and intended to be accompanied by stage music. If you have a look at the cast of characters, you can see that the playwright enriches the plot of the tale by adding new figures: weather or cosmic figures (The Wind, The Storm, The Good Star, The Moon, The Big Cloud, The Little Pink Cloud and the Sky Dweller), wonderful creatures (The Imaginary Beast, The King of the Evil Geniuses, The Fairy, The Voice, The Nightbirds), speaking animals or objects (The Bird, The Wolf, The Cow, The Wine Bottles, The Beef *all prepared for the spit*) and even a Good Old Man (nicknamed "Papa Gâteau") and... the Guignols!

PAB pays particular attention to the marionettes' movements and the stage effects, as in the Ogre's house:

2nd dance of the bottles. [...] Bacchic quadrille - One by one, the bottles on the floor rise up and dance a quadrille around the Ogre. Little by little the objects on the table or in the room join the bottles and dance on the spot, the table itself on which the Ogre is slumped starts to dance, from time to time during a quadrille the Ogre shouts "drink" and "my knife", then the curtain of the lower stage closes, that of the upper stage opens. A bed on each side, in one the seven boys are lying down, in the other the seven girls - moonlight.

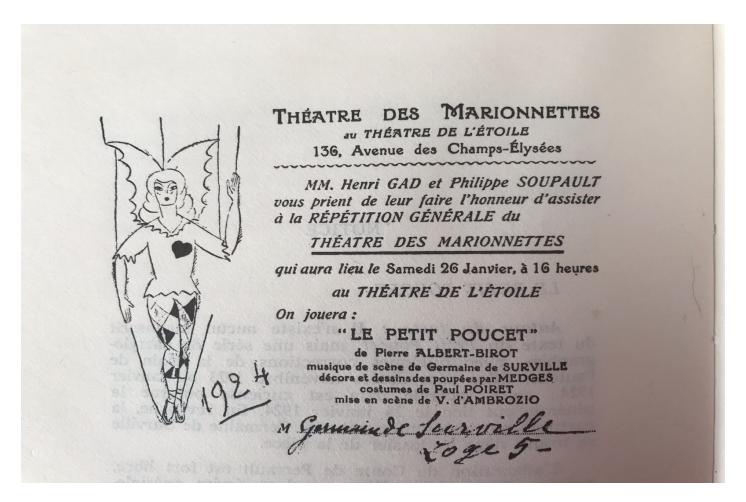
What is even more striking in the play is the way in which poetry and gentleness coexist with violence, especially that of his brothers against Petit Poucet, who regularly becomes their scapegoat. Thus, despite a happy ending as in the original tale, the siblings, overcome by jealousy, come to kill Petit Poucet. So the play continues with a

spectacular finale: the Ascension of the sacrificed character, transformed into an angel and escorted to Heaven by his Good Star.

Created in 1924 at the Théâtre de l'Etoile in Paris at the invitation of Philippe Soupault and Henri Gad and performed by the Waltons' string puppets, this *Petit Poucet* was a great success with both adults and children.



[Dr. Carole Guidicelli]



The Sarzi family archive

Otello Sarzi deeply renewed Italian puppet theatre. Not only a great experimenter of materials, he is also passed down to posterity for having staged major texts from theatre or literature with puppets. He addressed authors such as Alfred Jarry, Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Miguel de Cervantes, Franz Kafka, and Gianni Rodari (with whom he had an important collaboration), at a time when this practice was still far from being usual in castelets, thus anticipating the new avant-gardes of the Italian theatre and thus becoming one of the main artistic representatives of 1968.

The Fondazione Famiglia Sarzi, founded by Otello himself in 1996, is now located in Cavriago, in the province of Reggio Emilia, where Sarzi had moved in 1969 after his Roman period and the birth of his T.S.B.M. — Teatro



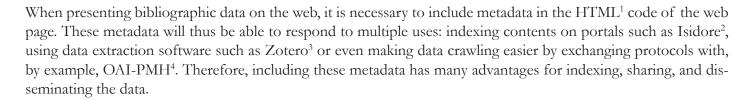


Stabile di Burattini e Marionette —, which became later the T.S.B. – Teatro Sperimentale dei Burattini.

After a recent move, the Fondazione Famiglia Sarzi is currently reorganising its collections. The museum has already been completed and opened to the public: it brings together many puppets made by Otello, his sister Gigliola and other members of the Sarzi family. The document archives are currently being reorganised, but in the Foundation's library, all the books that once belonged to Otello have already been catalogued. As for the scripts stored there - and which are of great interest to *PuppetPlays* - they have been classified by the Sarzi into three categories: the adult repertoire, the traditional repertoire and the musical repertoire. Not to mention the notebooks, letters, press reviews, etc. overflowing shelves and asking to be explored.

[Ma Francesca di Fazio]

Our choice of metadata tags



This raised the question of creating a unified description vocabulary on a global scale that could be used by all institutions that make the texts they preserve accessible on the web. From this reflection, the Dublin Core was born in 1995, after the name of the city of Dublin located... in Ohio, in the United States. It was there that a working group of professional librarians and computer scientists met, sponsored by the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center), a non-profit organization dedicated to the accessibility of knowledge in libraries. This working group produced a set of 15 properties (Metadata Elements) that are currently the bedrock for describing textual resources. New metadata tags were added to the Dublin Core shortly after and named therefore "Qualified Dublin Core" allowing to mention more specified information.

In addition, the booming growth of large digital companies has prompted some of them to create their own descriptive metadata set to tag their bibliographic data: with Google Books and Google Scholar, for example, Google owns one of the largest digitized collections of texts in the world. It is therefore quite natural that Google has developed a descriptive metadata vocabulary dedicated to its activities.

In the *PuppetPlays* project, we have chosen to multiply the descriptive metadata. Indeed, today, metadata harvesting algorithms read sometimes one set, sometimes another one, and most often a mixture of all. In order to open up our data as much as possible, we will use 3 different sets: the 15 properties from the Dublin Core plus one property from the Qualified Dublin Core⁵, and 4 tags from Google Scholar, and 8 more from Open Graph (a protocol

of data exchange created by Facebook). In doing so, we hope that our data will flow as well as possible. These metadata tags will only be intended for machines and therefore not visible to the user. The model of our metadata tags can be found at this link:

https://github.com/LaBretelle/metaTags-PuppetPlays/blob/main/meta tags PuppetPlays.html



[Ma Paul Robert]

- HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is a markup language designed to be displayed in a web browser. 1
- 2 Isidore is a portal that harvests metadata from various humanities data repositories on websites so as to make them all searchable simultaneously via a single website.
- Zotero is a free and open-source software dedicated to academic studies allowing to automatically retrieve bibliographic references, to modify them and to create a bibliography according to academic standards.
- OAI-PMH (Open Archive Initiative-Protocol for Metadata Harvesting) is a metadata harvesting and exchange protocol used in particular by archives and libraries. OAI-PMH is based on the Dublin Core metadata description.
- The Qualified Dublin Core metadata tag we use is called "DCTERMS:abstract". It is used to give a short summary of a work.

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